

# Social Questions

## BULLETIN

of the Methodist Federation for Social Service (unofficial), an organization which rejects the method of the struggle for profit as the economic base for society; which seeks to replace it with social-economic planning in order to develop a society without class distinctions and privileges.

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### The World Order

The discussion of the form and nature of the post-war world is now a part of our order of the day. It transcends the question of war aims and peace terms with which it is connected. Laski's book, "Where Do We Go from Here," and the People's Convention have posed the issue in England and helped to raise it here. This discussion repeats a chapter in the story of the last war. Whether the post-war world is to be any different this time depends upon whether the shape of things to come is again fashioned by the war aims of belligerents or by the social needs and ideals of the people of all lands.

Thus the time has come to consider the present situation and the future prospects of the American people from the viewpoint of the purpose set forth in the masthead of this BULLETIN, and to re-examine the nature and demand of the Christian principles upon which that purpose is based. Those who would fulfil the religion of Jesus as He fulfilled the law and the prophets, need now to remember that their duty, both in judgment and choice, goes beyond the immediate issues to the whole order of society which produced them. If religion and science do not now help this generation to deal effectively with the causes of the present world disorder, we shall proceed from bad to worse.

#### THE MALVERN CONFERENCE

In England the group of Anglicans called together at Malvern by the Archbishop of York, addressed themselves to this task. They recognized that they were facing a bigger issue than threatened invasion. Beyond that they saw a crisis in civilization arising from the nature of the society in which we live. Along with practical suggestions for the conduct of Christians at various points, the Conference passed judgment upon our capitalist society because it does not make the development of personality the end of its organized activities. It condemned the dominance of the profit motive in the industrial order and demanded that economic activity be made the servant of the development of personality. It declared that the ownership of the great resources of the community by private individuals is a stumbling block to the living of Christian lives, and urged the need for seeking some form of society in which this stumbling block will be removed. It set forth as "Our aim" for the period immediately following the war, "the unification of Europe as a co-operative commonwealth, first, in common effort for the satisfaction of general need, and secondly, in such politi-

cal institutions as express the common purpose and facilitate its development."

Those who pursue this matter here might well begin by asking whether the judgments of what is wrong with the present social order, and what needs to be done about it, show an advance over similar church statements during and immediately after the last war comparable to the increased inefficiency and destructiveness of the profit-seeking economy. The 1918 report of the Archbishop's Fifth Committee of Inquiry, Church of England, found that the deficiencies of the industrial system were "deeply rooted in the nature of that order itself. . . . To remove them it is necessary to be prepared for such changes as will remove the deeper causes of which they are the result. . . . The system itself makes it exceedingly difficult to carry into practice the principles of Christianity."

The Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church declared: "It is increasingly manifest that there must be progress away from selfish competition to unselfish co-operation in that struggle for daily bread, which is the largest single fact in the life of the majority of men in any community. . . . If Christianity is a driving force making for democracy we cannot put a limit upon the extension of democracy. . . ."

The Canadian Methodists said: "The war has made more clearly manifest the moral perils inherent in the system of production for profits. . . . The system, rather than the individual, calls for change. . . . We are in favor of the nationalization of our national resources, such as mines, water powers, fisheries, forests, the means of communication and transportation, and public utilities on which all people depend."

#### INCREASING BREAKDOWN

These moral judgments by religious groups, along with others which might be cited, were confirmed by the economic breakdown which in due time followed the dislocation of economic activity caused by the World War. The concreteness of the Federation's purpose, amplified in the M.F.S.S. pamphlet, "Outline of a Christian Program for Social Change," is due to that breakdown. Today the economic advisors of business are warning those in charge of it that the inevitable result of a war economy must be a still worse collapse.

The test point is unemployment, concerning which the Malvern Conference said: "We have seen the unemployment of Germany cured by an armament program, whether adopted primarily for this purpose or not, and



have cured our own though (even so) not completely, by the same means." We are now travelling the same road, despite the warning of the experts that the employment offered by defense industries is only a shot in the arm. Even now the same forces which are putting people to work are also increasing the problem.

A Congressional Committee was recently informed by a research expert in migratory labor, that the number of migratory workers had been increased by those who had left their jobs elsewhere to seek jobs they could not find in defense boom towns. The New York State Industrial Commissioner recently declared that the defense job boom is creating a "widespread migration of labor from one place to another in search of jobs that don't exist." Already several States have issued public warnings: "Stay away, there are no jobs here." The drive for speed in defense production is naturally speeding up the installation of automatic machinery. For instance, mechanical loaders soon to be installed in the mines that feed one steel company will displace 15,000 men. An economist writing in *Barrons Financial Weekly* thinks the United States may have 20,000,000 unemployed when the war is over. The American Federation of Labor warns that unless we start planning to prevent it a number of our new industrial communities will certainly become ghost towns after the emergency. Whatever the increase, all who know the problem are agreed that mass unemployment is now a permanent feature of the profit-seeking economy. This demonstrates it to be an unworkable and intolerable system pushing continually toward war.

### A BUSINESS MAN SPEAKS

The need for change and the approach of change is increasingly being recognized in the business world. One of the clearest expressions was in the recent address of Charles E. Wilson, President of the General Electric Company, to a company of business leaders. He pictured the world passing through "the second stage of a revolutionary movement of the masses—a movement born during World War I, and likely to last, with intermittent armistices of one kind or another, for two or three decades more."

He finds this movement to be due to the fact that "hundreds of millions of people throughout the world have been persuaded to the point of evangelistic conviction that the capitalist system is the cause of the insecurity of the common man, and that, as the root of his economic ills, this system must be drastically modified, or failing that, destroyed." To meet this situation he calls upon those who finance and manage "our free enterprise system" to meet their social responsibilities by using "their unmatched capacity to positively plan—to put into effect—and if you will, to police a program of industrial and commercial progress acceptable to the majority of our people. . . ."

Mr. Wilson then proposes a detailed program of reforms for the three stages of recovery that he expects the capitalist economy to pass through after the war, provided these things are done. In his third stage his plan calls for putting all employables to work. But this can only be done if business accepts at each step the reforms he proposes, most of which its dominant leaders have fought throughout the New Deal, and are now using the war emergency to prevent.

The recent *New Republic* survey of Democratic Defense points out that the peril of England is in large part due to the fact that British financiers and industrialists failed to give the nation the equipment it needed in aircraft, in machine tools, in steel, and in cement, because they insisted on putting profit first. The survey cites the case of one steel man whose competitors, through the bankers, got control of his mill, and "the bankers dismissed him because he attempted to give the British people more steel for their armaments, and to save the money on that steel." It points out that "one of the most important reasons for Britain's lack of air raid shelters today is her shortage of cement." Cement production in Britain is controlled exclusively by two firms who bought up and scrapped plants, restricted production, and raised prices and profits. *The Economist* wrote that when war broke out: "The noble army of controllers was recruited from organized industries. The rings from being tolerated became endowed with all the power of the State. . . . The result has been a startling inadequacy of production."

From its detailed examination of our defense production, the *New Republic* finds that instead of learning the lesson from British experience, "we are today making the same mistakes." It declares that the National Defense Advisory Commission whose duty it was to put the welfare of the entire nation above that of the vested interests, "served as an inside pressure group for the interests which were delaying the defense program." The industrialist controlled divisions of the Commission established the principle that all risk upon the new capital outlay should be borne by the Government. Thus big business was handed profit without risk, which is the supposed justification for such rate of profit as is now being made in defense operations. The conclusion regarding the Office of Production Management which succeeded the Defense Commission is that it "may well fail because it has been largely successful in driving the New Deal out of the defense program." In the face of this record in a war emergency, what chance is there of big business accepting Mr. Wilson's reformed capitalism for the post-war period?

Moreover his plan depends upon the use of the raw materials of Central and South America, and the industrialization of the temperate zone of Latin America. He would do this cooperatively by subsidies and not by the old type of imperialist exploitation. There would still remain, however, the fact that millions of Latin American workers would be contributing something to a luxury scale of living here that was needed for the development of their own starved lives there.

### OTHER VOICES

Other voices in the business world, also recognizing that capitalist recovery depends upon expansion, are talking an older language. Virgil Jordan, President of the National Industrial Conference Board, addressing the Investment Bankers Association of America concerning the prospects created by the National Defense Program, prefaced his technical discussion with a statement of policy. The core of its conclusion was: "Whatever the outcome of the war, America has embarked upon a career of imperialism, both in world affairs and in every other aspect of her life, with all the opportunities, responsibilities,



ties and perils which that implies. This war inevitably involves a vast revolution in the balance of political and economic power, not only internationally but internally. Even though, by our aid, England should emerge from this struggle without defeat, she will be so impoverished economically and crippled in prestige that it is improbable she will be able to resume or maintain the dominant position in world affairs which she has occupied so long. At best, England will become a junior partner in a new Anglo-Saxon imperialism, in which the economic resources and the military and naval strength of the United States will be the center of gravity. Southward in our hemisphere and westward in the Pacific the path of Empire takes its way, and in modern terms of economic power, as well as political prestige, the scepter passes to the United States."

The thesis that we are now to become the dominant partner in an expanded American-British imperialism is repeated by David Lawrence in the *United States News*, by Mark Sullivan in his Syndicated Column, and by other columnists and Washington correspondents. Isolationist business leaders speak the same language concerning Latin America as interventionists. General Robert E. Wood, of Sears Roebuck, told the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations: "Americans like myself feel that our true mission is in North America and South America. We stand today in an unrivalled position. With our resources and organizing ability we can develop, with our Canadian friends, an only partially developed continent like North America and a virgin continent like South America. The reorganization and proper development of Mexico alone would afford an outlet for our capital and energies for some time to come. And while I think we should try in every way to maintain the friendship of our neighbors to the South, I think we should also make it clearly understood that no government in Mexico, Central America, and the Caribbean South American countries will be tolerated unless it is friendly to the United States, and that, if necessary we are prepared to use force to attain that object."

### THE WINDOW DRESSING

The same trend is now appearing in other circles. Benjamin Marsh, of the *People's Lobby*, on a recent swing across the country found many men on the campuses saying that now is the time to build a great American empire. The *United States News* (February 28th) says that decisions in Washington "are now being based on the belief that if anybody is to run the world hereafter it should be the United States." In a large advertisement in his magazine *Life*, Mr. Luce, the founder of *Time*, tells us that by helping to win the war we will establish the United States as the dominant power in the world. We are to create an American "new order" in which democratic ideas will rule; to become the dynamic ruler of world trade; to provide the planet with technical and artistic skill by distributing our skilled personnel throughout the world; to feed the world by sending our food surpluses to the four corners of the globe as a free gift to every man, woman, and child who is really hungry; to be the power-house of the ideals of freedom and justice, distributing a set of values especially American.

Dorothy Thompson adds: "This will either be an

American century or it will be the beginning of the decline and fall of the American dream. . . . To Americanize enough of the world so that we shall have a climate and environment favorable to our growth, is indeed a call to destiny." She wants us to "bring about a reconstruction of a large part of the world in harmony with freedom and with an honest promise of prosperity for all." But her future is in charge of "the English speaking world," because the English language is the great uniter of men. This is supposed to be in a different moral realm than Hitler's unity by blood, but the "lesser tribes without the law" are the ones who will finally decide that.

The idea of an Anglo-Saxon confederation into which the Union Now movement has developed also reveals the same trend in idealizing the rising American-British imperialism. It covers up with moral phrases the necessity of monopoly capitalism to postpone the day of disaster by further expansion. It is the white man's burden dressed up in Rotarian language of service at a profit. It is as different from the spirit of the Gospel as the religious imperialism of ancient Israel was different from the ideal of the Hebrew nation as the "suffering servant."

This trend toward imperialism abroad is also a trend towards fascism at home. It is clear enough that Hitler and Mussolini united with internal repression the revival of an older form of imperialism. There appears here a similar conjunction of imperialist expansion and contraction of liberty. Our December SOCIAL QUESTIONS BULLETIN traced the latter development. Since then the record of repression grows longer. More and worse repressive laws are now pending in our legislatures than we have ever seen. We are now facing the worst assault upon freedom of education and freedom of thought that we have ever met. The fact that this movement was well developed before the present drive toward war, shows that its real source is in the attempt of a failing economy to prevent criticism and stop change.

### THE CHOICE

The recognition that the Day of Judgment for capitalist society has come, is growing. The intelligent leaders in the world of business and finance are expecting some form of State capitalism, and they are right in claiming that this involves an approach to the totalitarian state. The test of the followers of Jesus is whether they really want a classless society—that is, to make universal the Christian community. If they do, then it is necessary now to avoid the mistake that was made in the days of Constantine when the church chose the way of privilege and power, instead of the way of service and suffering with the people.

For those whose goal on earth is a society without class distinctions and privileges, the method of social-economic planning to meet the needs of all opens up the way to get there. There is no alternative. The struggle for profit leads to monopoly, imperialism, State capitalism, and fascism. It takes us back to the world the capitalist democratic revolution broke away from. The only other economic way of life open to us is the method of planning for social ends made possible by the national ownership of the necessary resources and plants. This is the way to the City of Life and away from the City of Destruction.

—HARRY F. WARD



## Order Now

"*Labor Fact Book V.*" Labor Research Association, 80 East 11th Street, New York, N. Y. Price \$1 (postage free). 224 pp.

There are chapters dealing with economic trends, labor and social conditions, labor legislation and taxation, the fight for civil rights, trade union developments, farmers and farm workers, and the principal events growing out of the present war.

This book was one of the sources for our February BULLETIN on "Living Standards."

## News from the Field

*The Dining Room, Inc.*, a restaurant in the Methodist Building at Washington, D. C., is now bargaining collectively with the Union in regard to wages and working conditions after months of appeals by members of the M.F.S.S. and of the United Cafeteria Employees Union.

However, this restaurant is still discriminating against Negro patronage.

Charles Webber was informed by the cashier on February 18, 1941, that the management did not approve of serving Negroes unaccompanied by white people; that there was no law prohibiting the serving of Negroes, but that such action would offend southern white patrons.

In the Supreme Court Building Cafeteria across the street from our Methodist Building Negroes are served unaccompanied by whites. Why cannot Methodism do as much in our Washington building?

Do we believe in the Social Creed of our church? It declares: "We stand for equal rights and complete justice for all men in all walks of life. . . . We stand for the rights of racial groups, and insist that the above social, economic, and spiritual principles apply to all races alike."

Write to the *Board of Temperance, Methodist Building, Washington, D. C.*, and request that when it renews the lease of the Dining Room, Inc., it insert a clause requiring the restaurant to stop maintaining a discriminatory policy against Negro patronage.

Ask your Annual Conference to make a similar request of the Board.

*Philadelphia Conference.* The Social Service Commission of the Philadelphia Conference of the Methodist Church, in its annual report of March 7, declared:

"The world convulsion through which we are passing is both political and economic—political as seen in the attempt of a single nation to rule the world, and economic in that the Axis countries contend that, with rapidly growing populations, they must have access to raw materials controlled by more favored nations. . . .

"Many (of our American) people are forced to subsist on as little as five cents per meal, and this in a country where we have a surplus of 400 million bushels of wheat and eight million bales of cotton before picking the 1940 crop.

"A civilization that is commodity rich and consumption poor will be continually plagued with economic problems. A way must be found to get this surplus wheat into the stomachs and the cotton on the backs of the millions of under-privileged."

## A Petition

Eighty-five members of the M.F.S.S. were included among the 450 educators, ministers, attorneys, writers, artists, youth leaders and social workers from 153 cities and towns in 37 states, who on March 3, 1941, petitioned President Roosevelt and all members of Congress to exercise their influence and authority in defense of the constitutional rights of the Communist Party.

The petition read, in part, as follows:

"To the President and the Congress of the United States:

"We bring to your attention a matter of vital significance to the future of our nation. It is the attitude of our government toward the Communist Party.

"In the recent election the Communist Party was ruled off the ballot, either by executive decision or court action, in fifteen states. In several of these states many persons have been indicted for exercising their legal right to sign a nominating petition. . . .

"In Oklahoma two young men have been sentenced to ten years in prison and to \$5,000 fine under a state law which forbids advocacy of

the violent overthrow of the government, one without proof of anything except membership in the Communist Party, the other without proof of anything except possession of Communist literature. . . .

"In our own nation the attack upon the constitutional rights of Communists has been followed by a general assault upon the rights of labor, upon progressive legislation, upon academic freedom. It is clear that if the wave of reaction is to be stopped it must be checked when it attacks the most unpopular political party.

"Consequently we, who are not Communists, whose concern goes beyond the preservation of their constitutional rights to the maintenance of the democratic way of life as the road into the future, urge you, the President, to exercise your authority and influence to prevent those under you from stimulating un-American actions against Communists by undemocratic utterances.

"We also urge all members of Congress to oppose any legislation, direct or indirect, that would take away from Communists those constitutional guarantees which must be kept open for all if in the future they are to be available for any."

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